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AUTHOR Loch, Karen D.; Deans, P. Candace
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ABSTRACT

The intent of this study is to provide insight as to where schools are going in terms of their success in internationalizing the information systems (IS) curriculum, testing to see if, in fact, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and other external forces are evidencing any effect. This research reports the findings of an empirical study specifically designed to evaluate trends toward internationalization of the IS curriculum. The reported results reflect a 5-year time horizon as well as a comparison of AACSB member accredited schools to AACSB member schools that are not accredited. The study provides the first comparison of IS internationalization curriculum trends over time with emphasis on AACSB accreditation. This work also provides IS educators with a benchmark and knowledge of overall trends with respect to information systems curriculum development. (Author)

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IS THERE A DIFFERENCE OR WHO'S DOING WHAT? A COMPARISON OF AACSB ACCREDITED AND NON-ACCREDITED SCHOOLS' INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS CURRICULUM

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Karen D. Loch
Georgia State University

P. Candace Deans
Thunderbird - The American Graduate School

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The intent of this study is to provide insight as to where schools are going in terms of their success in internationalizing the information systems (IS) curriculum, testing to see if, in fact, The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and other external forces are evidencing any effect. This research reports the findings of an empirical study specifically designed to evaluate trends toward internationalization of the IS curriculum. The reported results reflect a five year time horizon as well as a comparison of AACSB member accredited schools to AACSB member schools that are not accredited. This study provides the first comparison of IS internationalization curriculum trends over time with emphasis on AACSB accreditation. This work also provides IS educators with a benchmark and knowledge of overall trends with respect to information systems curriculum development.

INTRODUCTION

Review of the past five to seven years in both the research literature and curriculum design finds a concerted effort to incorporate an international dimension into the existing information systems (IS) curriculum. Prior to 1990, there is a notable lack of international focus in the IS research. Those studies that examined international IS issues were limited and fragmented, not growing a defined stream of research based on previous empirical works. A similar situation existed with respect to IS curriculum. The traditional IS curriculum was taught from a domestic (US) perspective with little or no emphasis on international issues and problems and opportunities encountered by multinational firms. No doubt this was in part due to the dearth of textbooks available for introductory IS courses with any international content. During this same period, curriculum guidelines established through the work of the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM), Data Processing Management Association (DPMA), the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), and other recognized organizations were also void of guidelines to include international content in the IS curriculum.

Since 1990, much has changed. Different course models focusing on both undergraduate and graduate programs have been developed (Deans, Loch, and Roche, 1993). Many schools have followed the lead in implementing some form of an IS course with international content. Much attention has been paid to the evolution of international IS curriculum issues at annual IS

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conferences (e.g., Information Resources Management Association, and the International Academy for Information Management). The establishment of CIBER institutions (Center of International Business and Economics Research) around the country has made available significant financial resources to conduct faculty development in international business and specifically in international IS to interested and motivated parties. Major improvements are evidenced in recent textbooks, which incorporate international topics throughout the text rather than relegating the topic to the last chapter as an after thought. The AACSB, for example, called for the incorporation of an international dimension in the curriculum for years; it is only recently that there seems to be more teeth to this directive. One question that arises is the extent to which these efforts have been successful?

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Recent literature indicates an increased interest in business school curriculum in general over the past few years. The international dimension has emerged as one of the key drivers of curriculum reform. The emergence of the World Wide Web (WWW) and increased access to information on the internet has changed the dynamics of curriculum design. The internet and WWW have opened doors and opportunities not before possible on an international scale. Business schools across the board have implemented revised curriculum plans that incorporate and integrate information technology throughout the curriculum. These factors have made it more difficult to define the international dimension of the IS curriculum and its evolution over time.

A comprehensive review of the literature focusing on IS curriculum in general as well as the evolution of the international component over time can be found in Deans and Loch (1996). The Deans and Loch (1996) research provides the foundation work from which this study is an extension. The literature review traces the origins of the international IS component and describes the development and implementation of individualized international IS courses as well as other alternative approaches for internationalizing the overall curriculum. Previous studies have also reported trends toward internationalization efforts in foreign schools of business.

In this paper we extend this literature base to explain some of the results of recent efforts to internationalize the IS curriculum and specifically evaluate the impact of external forces with particular emphasis on the AACSB. No study to date has looked at the impact of various influences on international IS curriculum trends and specific course offerings over time. We hope this study will shed some light on these issues and provide insights for other schools in the process of making similar decisions about the future direction of their IS curriculum.

In summary, this study contributes to the IS curriculum literature, differentiating between types of institutions and their respective responses to the trend toward internationalization of the IS curriculum. The findings highlight the impact that external forces have had on the extent to which respective institutions have internationalized the IS program. The findings also offer tangible feedback to interested institutions to compare themselves across groupings. Moreover, as this is the first study of this kind, it also serves as a baseline for future studies.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study followed the design of the first survey of US Schools of Business by Goslar and Deans (1994). This study reports the findings of a follow-up survey that provides a direct comparison of these schools' internationalization progress over a five year period. The sample was segmented into three categories: 1) Leaders as defined by their early involvement in internationalizing the IS curriculum 2) AACSB member schools that are accredited, and 3) AACSB member schools that not accredited.

Sample

The total sample size numbered 647; those schools who responded to the 1990 survey comprise the leaders group. The leaders group represented 112 institutions or 17% of the total sample. Of the total sample, 44.5% were accredited institutions versus 55.5% non-accredited. However, two-thirds of the leaders group was comprised of AACSB accredited institutions. If one looks at the sample minus the leaders group, the balance of accredited to non-

accredited schools shifts markedly. Table 1 provides the details of the sample by segment.

Research Questions

Three research questions are the focus of this study and are examined in light of the three groups.

1. What are the major forces driving IS curriculum reform toward inclusion of an international dimension? How have these influences changed over time and how are these groups responding?
2. What strategies and teaching alternatives are being implemented to accomplish the objectives of internationalizing the IS curriculum? Do these differ by groupings, demonstrating effects of external agencies, and if so, how?
3. How are these different groups responding to the internationalization process:
   a) development of separate international IS courses?
   b) placing importance on internationalizing the IS curriculum? And
   c) future plans toward internationalization?

These research questions reflect the exploratory nature of the study. Very little is currently known about these issues since the incorporation of international IS content into the curriculum is relatively recent. Rapid changes in information technology and overall curriculum design add complexity to the research questions. This study is intended to shed some light on current trends and expose issues and relevant considerations that may not have surfaced previously. Identifying these future research paths and curriculum directions are inherent in the design of this work.

Questionnaire

The instrument was comprised of four sections, all of which were taken from the first survey. Respondents evaluated a list of twelve influences identified as drivers for international IS curriculum development on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = not important and 7 = extremely important). This list is presented in the results section in Table 4. Similarly, a seven point scale (1=very effective; 7=very ineffective) was used to evaluate the effectiveness of international IS teaching alternatives (i.e., a separate international IS course, international topics integrated into the core IS curriculum, international topics integrated into only select IS courses). The third section included several questions designed to evaluate perceptions toward internationalization of IS curriculum that were evaluated on a seven point scale (1= strongly agree and 7= strongly disagree). An open-ended question intended to identify major themes and topics considered essential for internationalizing the IS curriculum was incorporated. Finally, a number of variables describing current IS program characteristics and future plans were included.

Respondents and Data Analysis

The questionnaire was administered by mail and sent to 647 business schools, 112 constituted the leaders group, 213 and 322 represented accredited and non-accredited AACSB members respectively. Of the 112 leaders institutions surveyed, 66 questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 59 percent.

TABLE 1

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS BY ACCREDITATION

	Total Sample	Leaders	AACSB Accredited	Non-accredited
Accredited	288 / 44.5%	75 / 67%		
Non-accredited	359 / 55.5%	37 / 33%		
Total N	647	112 / 17.3%		
Total N - leaders	535		213 / 39.8%	322 / 60.2%

Eighty-two or 38.5% of the accredited schools responded whereas only 46 or 14.3% of the non-accredited schools participated. A profile of general characteristics of respondents from both studies is presented in Table 2. A discussion of these variables and their relationship to the study results is presented in the results and discussion section.

Data analysis is primarily descriptive. Frequency distributions and two-tailed t-tests are reported. These findings are general in nature, suggesting direction for more in-depth analytical work in future studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All four groups' descriptive characteristics varied little at first glance. For example, the proportion of schools offering undergraduate and graduate programs was comparable. The single exception was the non-accredited institutions' lack of doctoral programs. When one looks beyond the averages however, a more interesting story unfolds. Table 3 highlights the story. While the percentage of program internationalized is within one point between the groups, 24% of both the non-accredited and the accredited respondents indicated that their respective programs were zero internationalized. One respondent from an accredited institution commented "Our curriculum is still in the dark ages of IS. We have yet to discover its international dimensions." In contrast, 19% of the leaders group indicated that their programs remained sans international. Based on most other indicators, the accredited group seem to be farther along in the internationalization process than even the leaders group. This may in part be explained by the fact that the leaders group is comprised of 2/3 accredited institutions, 1/3 non-accredited institutions. One also observes that the accredited and leader schools on a whole seem to offer larger programs, with a smaller percentage of them offering only 2 or fewer courses at the undergraduate level and 1 or fewer at the graduate level. This observation is of import as program size is likely a factor of the ability to offer stand-alone courses, one of three teaching delivery channels we examine shortly.

TABLE 2

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALL GROUPS

	Survey 1 (1990)	Leaders (1994)	Accredited	Non-accredited
Offer an IS degree program in the following levels:				
Baccalaureate:	75%	77%	68%	70%
Masters:	30%	27%	40%	28%
Doctoral:	16%	17%	18%	2%
How many IS courses are currently taught? (mean/std dev)	3.18 (1.76)	2.42 (1.93)	3.56 (4.63)	1.33 (1.34)
Undergraduate				
Graduate	4.04 (3.49)	2.35 (3.05)	3.62 (3.23)	2.10 (1.73)
Number of IS faculty (mean, std dev)	7.02 (5.70)	5.14 (3.6)	6.60 (6.9)	5.38 (5.78)
# of faculty with intl background &/or training (mean, std dev)	not asked	2.10 (2.8)	2.31 (2.66)	1.52 (1.52)
Percentage of IS program internationalized (mean)	not asked	16% (17%)	17% (25%)	16% (23%)

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF GROUPS BEYOND THE AVERAGE

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Faculty Background	% Schools with Programs ZERO Internationalized
Non-accredited	54%<= 2	50%<= 1	81%<=2; 29%=0	24%
Accredited	43%<=2	31%<=1	68%<=2; 19%=0	24%
Leaders	50%<=2	44%<=1	76%<=2; 24%=0	19%
Survey 1	41%<=2	50%<=1	Not asked	Not asked

The percentage of faculty with international background and/or training also presents some interesting differences amongst the groups. Only 19% of the accredited schools indicated that there faculty had no international background whereas 29% of the non-accredited schools' faculty had none. The leaders group again places between the two groups, with 24% of the leaders group lacking faculty with experience or training. These numbers are rather surprising, especially for a group of institutions whom we've considered leaders. It suggests that there is much work still to be done in the internationalization process.

Major International IS Topics And Themes

Respondents were asked to prioritize the five most important topics for the International IS curriculum. Based on our subjective judgment, Table 4 provides a listing in priority of the top five topics by group. We've also included responses from the first survey as a comparison over time. There is strong agreement of the importance of telecommunications and management of the information resource. The span of topics mentioned is quite broad, but some consistent themes emerge.

TABLE 5

SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL TOPICS BY GROUP

Survey 1 (1990)	Leaders	Accredited	Non-accredited
Worldwid tele-communications	International tele-communications	Global tele-communications	Global tele-communications
Transnational information flows	Transborder data flows	Global strategic use of IT	Transborder data flows
Global strategic use of IT	Global communications - Internet	International standards	Legal considerations (trade & tariff laws; security & privacy)
Multilingual computing	Global enterprise networking	Multi-cultural aspects of IS development	International standards
ISDN	EDI	International law	Understanding cultural differences

This list is consistent with the themes defined by Deans & Loch (1996). In fact, there seems to be considerable agreement across groups in how we might envision the international IS component for curriculum design.

Theme 1: Global Connectivity and Telecommunication

Theme 2: Management of Global Information Flows

Theme 3: Planning and Strategic Implications of Global IT

Theme 4: Global Integration of Systems, Technology, Processes, and People.

When asked to indicate the importance of the reasons for internationalizing the IS curriculum, the results are consistent with the general topics and themes identified for all groups (see Tables 4 and 5). Global economic interdependence and transborder data flows were two of the top three reasons for all three groups. These reasons were considered significantly more important in 1994 than in 1990 where these two items were ranked 4th and 5th respectively. That said, all groups held the same five reasons as top motivators to internationalize the IS curriculum albeit in different order. At the same time, the importance attributed to the various reasons increased comparably over the original survey's assessment. The #1 reason was different for each of the three current groups. The bold numbers in Table 5 signal those reasons where there is a significant difference between the groups at the .04 level with the exception of global economic interdependence at the .10 level. There was no significant differences between the leaders and the accredited or the leaders and the non-accredited institutions.

Reasons for internationalization which remained the same or decreased in importance over the past five years held true for all three groups. The reasons with asterisk found all three groups moving towards internationalization.

Three additional items merit comment when comparing the three groups. First, the non-accredited group found the issue of *faculty with foreign experience and education* to be significantly less important than did the accredited group (p=.04). All groups concurred on the importance of industry demands as a motivator to internationalize the IS curriculum, indicating a similar increase above the 1990 study. Finally, internationalizing the IS curriculum in response to academic governing bodies confirmed an intuitive expectation: the non-accredited group saw their influence of little

TABLE 5

REASONS FOR INTERNATIONALIZING THE IS CURRICULUM

Reason (mean scores)	Survey 1 (1990)	Leaders	Accredited	Non-accredited
Growth in multinational corps.	5.48	5.50	5.61	5.74
Global economic interdependence	**5.40** (.10)	**5.75**	5.89	5.80
Transnational information flows	**5.39** (.04)	**5.83**	5.83	5.84
Use IT for international comp. adv*	5.50	5.70	5.73	5.83
Expand global telecommunications*	5.53	5.80	5.72	5.95
Hardware standardization	4.15	4.05	4.05	4.0
Software standardization	4.14	4.15	4.05	4.22
IS methods standardization	3.98	3.86	3.85	3.91
Changes in international law	4.00	4.00	4.05	3.89
Faculty w/ foreign exp. & educ.	3.77	3.48	**3.90** (.04)	**3.27**
Influence of acad governing bodies*	3.56	3.66	3.70	3.37
Industry demands *	4.56	4.95	5.08	4.96

1=not at all important / 7=extremely important / *=moving in a positive international direction
Responses in bold are statistically significant.

import. While both the leaders and accredited groups indicated that it was of more importance than it were to the first survey or the non-accredited respondents, it was the least important reason overall for all groups to pursue the internationalization of the curriculum.

Course Delivery Strategies

The respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the three most common course delivery strategies on a Likert-like scale at the graduate and undergraduate levels (1=very effective; 7=very ineffective). There is a consistent pattern amongst the groups: all indicated that the most effective means of course delivery was to integrate international topics into core IS course offerings as evidenced by the responses shown in Table 6. The trend, however, is that strategy one, at both levels, is viewed as becoming less effective than previously evaluated by Survey 1 respondents. There is disparity between the groups for strategy two. The leaders and non-accredited groups evaluate strategy two as more effective for undergraduates and less effective for graduates in comparison to five years ago. However, the accredited group's interpretation is exactly the inverse. To further complicate the picture, all agreed that the separate international course alternative was the least effective based on raw numbers but the one category where all groups viewed it as a significantly more effective strategy at both levels five years later.

We can offer several plausible interpretations to the findings. In 1990, offering international topics integrated into core IS course offerings was considered to be the most effective medium of delivery. This may have been for three reasons: a way to offer the broadest exposure to the greatest number of students -- all students must take core courses, and the level of difficulty in delivering the course material was considerably less than for a separate international course. Hence the preferred choice. Another possible explanation is that by integrating international topics into core IS course offerings, the students obtain the most realistic snapshot of what they will find in industry. As schools joined the internationalization effort, they simply did what the first generation leaders did. Five years hence, we have matured in our understanding of what constitutes international information systems, there are more materials available, and we now find that a smattering of international in

TABLE 6

EVALUATION OF TEACHING ALTERNATIVES

Effectiveness (mean scores) 1=very effective 7=very ineffective	**Survey 1 (1990)**	**Leaders**	**Accredited**	**Non-accredited**
Int'l topics incorporated only in select IS courses				
UG	3.47	3.72	3.78	3.72
G	3.39	3.71	3.38	3.75
Int'l topics integrated into core IS course offerings				
UG	3.23	3.06	3.32	3.11
G	2.93	3.05	2.82	3.33
Separate International Course				
UG	**5.18** (.10)	**4.71**	4.66	4.57
G	**4.87** (.01)	**4.08**	4.05	4.21

Responses in bold are statistically significant.

TABLE 7

INTERNATIONALIZATION PERSPECTIVE FOR IS CURRICULUM

Internationalizing the IS Curriculum (mean scores) 1=strongly agree 7=strongly disagree	**Survey 1 1990**	**Leaders**	**Accredited**	**Non-accredited**
IS courses should be taught from a ____ perspective:				
Global *	3.13	3.02	3.12	3.24
US	4.00	4.22	4.52	4.26
Local/regional	4.81	5.07	5.20	4.83
Institutions will offer intl IS course within 3 years *	5.14	4.83	4.49	5.02
IS programs become similar to foreign IS programs in near future *	4.65	4.53	4.47	4.56
IS program *MUST* be international *	3.44	**3.38** (.05)	**2.85**	**3.40** (.06)
Your IS program *IS* international	**4.79**	**4.21** (.02)	4.18	4.62
There is an emphasis on *'internationalization'*	**2.30**	**3.34** (.000)	**3.09**	**3.68** (.05)

Responses in bold are statistically significant.

a core course is insufficient treatment of the subject matter, ergo an increasing preference for the separate course.

Table 6 presents the means by group for each teaching strategy. There were no statistically significant differences found between leaders, accredited, and non-accredited groups. Offering a separate international course remains to be viewed as the least effective alternative although it is significantly more effective than reported in the first survey. As an alternative, a separate international course seems to be most viable at the graduate level in accredited programs. This finding might also reflect the international experience and training, or lack thereof, of faculty. Recall that of the three groups, the accredited group represented the smallest proportion of schools with faculty with no experience or training in international (see Table 3). Stand-alone courses necessitate an instructor who is more conversant in international IS issues than do the other alternatives. This makes it an alternative that is more difficult to replicate widely at all institutions.

IS Curriculum International Trends

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with eight statements (1=strongly agree, 7=strongly disagree). The stronger their agreement with the statements, the stronger their support for internationalizing the curriculum. They first reacted to several statements reflecting the orientation and perspective from which international IT courses should be taught, i.e., a global, U.S., or local/regional perspective. As

shown in Table 7, the leaders group is the biggest advocate of teaching courses from a global perspective. There is general agreement amongst all groups that teaching from a local / regional perspective is no longer acceptable. However the non-accredited group expressed their view less strongly. The likelihood of offering an international course within the next three years is not overwhelming although higher than five years ago. The accredited group is the best candidate to do so, followed by the leaders group and the non-accredited group respectively. We acknowledge that stand-alone courses are not for everyone. In addition to faculty interest and expertise, other factors likely to contribute to this finding include resource constraints and administrative obstacles.

The accredited group indicated strongly that the IS program MUST be internationalized. The leaders group and non-accredited group were very similar in their assessment of the directive. Both groups were statistically significantly different from the accredited group. When asked to assess the international status of their own IS programs, all three groups indicated that progress is being in comparison to five years, but slowly. The accredited group self-evaluated the most internationalized. A surprise finding was the reduced emphasis on internationalization perceived by the respondents in the second survey. The differences found were between the first survey participants and the leaders group, and between the accredited and non-accredited groups. There was no significant differences between the leaders group and the accredited or non-accredited group. This surprise finding may actually be positive in that the respondents' level of sensitivity to international is heightened over time such that they are not satisfied with where they are in contrast to where they want to be, where they think they should be, in the internationalization process. That said, clearly the non-accredited group is the least concerned about internationalization viz-a-viz the other groups.

CONCLUSIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH

In summary, the major forces driving IS curriculum reform to include an international dimension are very similar across groups and over time. What has changed is the order of import by group. Both the original study and the non-accredited group ranked global telecommunications and the number one reason. It is interesting to note that those reasons ranked higher by the leaders group and the accredited group are in fact, one might argue, a by-product of global telecommunications capabilities, i.e. *transnational information flows* and *global economic interdependence*.

We can extrapolate from the findings the effects of external agencies, such as AACSB on the internationalization process. When compared to all the other motivating factors to internationalize, *the influence of academic governing bodies* was ranked last. Despite the low ranking, the importance of the factor over time did increase. Moreover, the accredited group rated it the highest of all the groups, which argues that the AACSB directives, for example, are having some influence. The leaders group rated it second with the non-accredited group viewing such entities as being rather unimportant. As the leaders group is comprised of a mix of accredited and non-accredited schools, the result fits the pattern.

When considering different strategies for course delivery, the general consensus seems to be that international topics, whether in select IS courses or in core IS courses, are more effective than a separate international course. The irony is that the ratings over time of each strategy is going in the wrong direction. With two exceptions, that being the accredited group's ratings of graduate level courses, all ratings suggest that we are becoming less effective. In contrast, while the groups ranked the separate international course last in terms of effectiveness, over time, they rated its effectiveness as improving. We offered some explanations as to why this might be in our earlier discussion.

Between one-fifth (accredited group) and one-third (non-accredited group) of the schools indicated that they had faculty with no international experience or training. How then are we to serve the business community? To what extent are we able to ameliorate our condition by producing new faculty members with a strong international component? It would seem as well that there is a small but significant proportion of our schools which have made no attempts, or reported success in the endeavor to internationalize. Almost one-fourth of both the

non-accredited and accredited institutions stated that their programs were *zero* internationalized. The challenge continues.

If one asks the question, are we making progress? The answer is YES . . . slowly. As we set out to compare the leaders group to the accredited vs. non-accredited groups, we were surprised by the results. In sum, we expected the leaders to out perform the other groups. In reality, we found that membership in the leaders group is by virtue of their participation in the original study, not where they are today in the internationalization of their IS curriculum. Rather, the accredited group showed consistently more advanced in the internationalization process although not of a statistically significance. However, in one instance there was a statistically significant difference between the accredited and leader groups. This one point is interesting as it was in response to the statement "IS programs must be internationalized." The accredited group agreed strongly with this statement (2.85) versus the leaders group (3.38) (p.=.05). Nor was the non-accredited group as committed to this directive (3.40). We certainly expected the leaders group to support this statement.

This study not only contributes to the IS curriculum literature, but it also differentiates between types of institutions and their respective responses to the trend toward internationalization of the IS curriculum over time. A major contribution of this study is that it serves as a base-line for future studies that follow our progress to internationalize the curriculum. We must ask 'Where to from here?' Future examination of our progress in internationalizing our IS curriculum should include consideration of technologies such as the web, and distance learning. We can argue that these technologies transform the development and delivery of courses with international content, making it more accessible to a broader range of faculty groups. Finally, our challenge is to stay in tune with the overall business school curriculum strategy and relevant developments in industry. Here's to the future.

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